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Educational Series

WEST AFRICA

TEACHERS IN VILLAGE SCHOOLS, GERMAN KAMERUN, WEST AFRICA MISSION.

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The story of education in West Africa is quite different from that in most of our missions. Instead of an ancient civilization like those of Asiatic countries, with a highly developed language, and the traditions of many centuries of literary culture, the pioneers in Africa went to tribes in a primitive condition, without even a written language as a medium of instruction. The Mpongwe used in the southern part of our field was first reduced to writing by Rev. J. L. Wilson and Rev. William Walker in 1843; and soon after the Dikele and the Benga, which is understood by most of the coast people, were also written. Later missionaries came into contact with the Fang and the Bulu of the interior, and performed the same service for them. These dialects are all variations of the Bantu tongue, and differ in vocabulary more than in structure.

The entire New Testament and most of the Old Testament have been translated into Benga and Mpongwe, and the Gospels and most of the Epistles are now printed in Bulu. There are also hymn books and elementary school books in each language. Each tribe is proud of its own dialect, and sometimes they resent the use of Benga in their schools, instead of their own unwritten tongues. A greater difficulty arises from the requirements of the three European governments among whom this strip of coast is divided. In Libreville and the neighborhood only French is allowed in the schools; at Benito, Spanish is compulsory; and in Batanga and the Kamerun country, German is required. Of course, the schools are all of elementary grade, and as far as possible industrial training is made prominent. Miss Isabella Nassau, who spent a long life in teaching West Africans, says of them: "With rare exceptions, our natives are desirous of learning to read and write, books and reading being to them new and attractive. For generations the only libraries of our Bantu people have been their memories, wherein were stored their treasures of fable, proverb and tradition. These two facts, the novelty of a book and the long training in memorizing, make teaching our people to read less laborious than in some places. A pleasant feature of the work is that instruction is necessarily of a religious nature. The first oral effort is in Gospel truth; the first sentences read are Bible words."

Schools in West Africa.

BY MRS. W. M. DAGER.

THE Forward Movement is not confined to America alone. Advance has marked the work of the West Africa Mission along every line, and especially in its educational activities. Although the progress varies in the different stations, the difference is due more to the limitations of an inadequate force than to lack of interest on the part of the natives.

A comparatively recent feature of the educational work is the development of the village schools. In three years the number has grown to twenty-eight in the Kamerun district. They are taught by native teachers, and are, without exception, self-supporting.

The missionary in charge of the school work at each station has the oversight of the schools within his territory. Not the least of his duties is the training of some of his pupils in mind and heart, so that they may be fitted to stand as leaders and exponents of the truth they teach.

This system of schools, aside from relieving the congestion at the station, is proving a great blessing to the various communities as an evangelizing agency, for only Christian young men are sent, hence their influence is telling forcefully for good wherever they are. They conduct a brief Bible reading and prayer service daily, and on Sunday a service is regularly held. The general aspect of a village on the Sabbath day easily shows whether or not it has been under the influence of a village teacher or a former pupil of the Mission.

At a recent council called by the Governor of the German colony, in the interest of education, there were present representatives of the various missions in that colony, and among many vital questions presented, there was a discussion regarding a uniform curriculum, and also as to the number of years that a pupil should be required to attend school. Finally it was concluded that a minimum of five years be required, two years in vernacular, and three years in German.

THE GABOON DISTRICT.

CLASS OF CATECHUMENS, LIBREVILLE

The school work at Baraka (Libreville) dates back to 1842, when the Mission of the American Board was transferred there from Cape Palmas, in Liberia. The labors and devotion of the founders are still bearing fruit in the lives of their pupils. Soon after the transfer of the work to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in 1870, the French began to enforce their claim to the Gaboon region, and the schools were seriously hampered at times by the difficulty of complying with their requirements. Death and illness have caused constant changes in the always inadequate force of missionaries, and the lack of funds and the aggression at all points of the Roman Catholic schools, always well equipped with workers and money, have made conditions sometimes disheartening. Yet the boarding school has been faithfully maintained, and reports for 1907 show an average attendance of thirty-five girls and twenty-five boys, who have paid tuition fees amounting to 205 francs. The missionaries are eager to improve the school, so that it may compare favorably with the secular schools recently organized by the French Government, and afford at the same time the Christian training so necessary to the best development of the pupils.

Not a few who were attending the Catholic school returned to the Mission upon the re-opening of the school, it having been closed by the necessary departure of the French teacher.

CORISCO

School work in Corisco has been continuous since the island was first occupied in 1850. The early schools were consolidated at Elongo, on a beautiful site, overlooking the bay. Rev. Mr. and Mrs. De Heer and Mrs. Reutlinger were in charge here for many years. After they removed to Benito, the entire work on the island was carried on by their earliest convert, the Rev. Ibia J'Ikenge. The church and schools are now self-supporting, under the care of his son, Bodumba, a noble young man, who inherits alike the grace of character and the mental grasp of his honored father.

THE "DOROTHY"

ANGOM

The Fang people occupy both sides of the Gaboon estuary and extend far inland. A station was opened among them at Angom in 1881, and a little church gathered. From 1899 to 1907, no missionary resided there, but the Christians were visited, when possible, by missionaries from Baraka, in the naphtha launch "Dorothy." The station was reopened in 1907, and a school organized. The task of re-establishing the work has not been without difficulty; but the school was kept open for two terms, with an average

attendance of forty. The little launch does good service in visiting the Fang towns scattered up and down the river, and collecting children for the school.

BENITO Benito, where Miss Nassau, Mrs. De Heer, Mrs. Reutlinger and Miss Christensen spent so many happy and laborious years (1869-1906), in teaching and elevating the people, is now rejoicing in the acquisition of the Spanish-speaking missionary so long sought for. Dr. O. H. Pinney superintends the school in the morning, and gives the afternoons to medical work. The new impetus given to the school work is evident when we hear that in one day the number of pupils grew from fourteen to seventy. Each pupils pays thirty-five cents a month. Three hours a day are given to industrial work. The boys are taught gardening, the girls sewing, housewifery and laundering.

The Sub-Governor of New Bata, who came to inspect the school, was entertained by the children with hymns and songs in Spanish, and expressed great satisfaction with the lessons and recitations. The following letter was sent to the missionaries in charge:

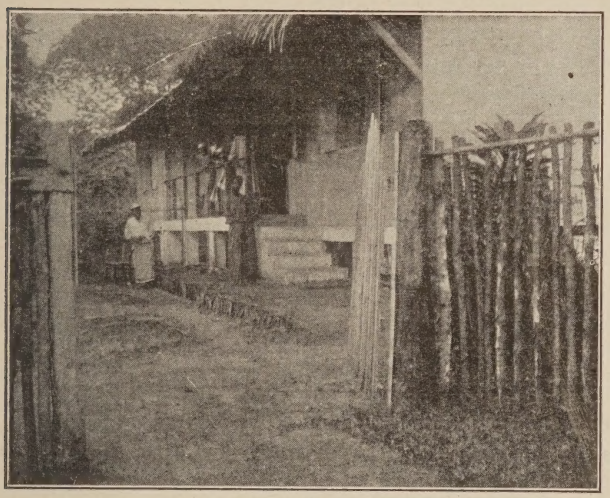
In the visit of inspection made to Rio Benito as Sub-Governor of New Bata, I take pleasure in showing to you that I hold a very good impression of the training that I saw among the native boys and girls, that they are being well educated in the Mission and that they very worthily conduct themselves. My attention was called to the difficulties in teaching the natives to speak correctly the Spanish language. They are also being taught to venerate Spain and its laws. At the same time, I shall give the same account to His Excellency, the Governor General, of the brilliant instruction the native children have, and I am obliged to recommend the vigilance and effort of the professors (missionaries), whom I compliment in the name of the nation of which I am the representative on this Continent. May God grant you many years.

(Signed,) GINES GARCIA DE PAREDES Y CASTRO,
Sub-Governor of New Bata.

THE KAMERUN DISTRICT.

BATANGA

Native teachers and preachers from Benito were the first to begin work at Batanga. The boys' boarding school was organized by Rev. G. A. Godduhn in 1890. The building is a two-story structure of wood, the lower floor being used as a dormitory for the boys and the upper rooms for classes.



MISS NASSAU'S RESIDENCE AND SCHOOL, BATANGA.

A day school for girls, opened by Miss Nassau in 1892, was maintained by her with wonderful success until her death in 1906. The difficulty of obtaining the German teachers required by the Government, and the small and constantly changing force of missionaries at Batanga, have for some years hindered the progress of the schools. The station school has been carried on regularly under these disadvantages, and the people are making increasing efforts toward self-support. Village schools are held at five points, where the young men who have been pupils in the main school have an opportunity to apply their knowledge.

EFULEN

The first station in the interior of the Kamerun country was established by Dr. Adolphus Good in 1893 at Efulen, about forty-five miles east of Batanga. The Mission buildings stand on the summit of a hill, two thousand feet above the sea,

and command a superb view. Dr. Good reduced the Bulu language to writing, prepared a primer and the elements of a dictionary, and translated the four Gospels. Fifteen years have wrought a wonderful change in the condition of the people. It is no longer necessary to travel through the country seeking for pupils. The boys' school has an enrollment of 290, the largest in its history, and the tuition paid by the students amounted last year to 586 marks.

The new school house occupied by the German department is fitted up in modern style, with benches and desks, and comfortable dormitories are replacing the former bark sheds, with double tiers of bamboo beds. There are intermediate and advanced classes in German. Lectures in hygiene are given regularly through the year, and the rudiments of music are also taught. The school makes good use of the maps, globe, charts, etc., with which it is partially equipped. A study room is provided, so that any ambitious youth may, after work hours, find a quiet place where he may study undisturbed.

Industrial training is made especially prominent. The girls have sewing classes; the boys are instructed in tailoring and carpentry. The substantial church and school house were built entirely by the school boys. They pay for their food in hours of work, a careful account being kept with them, and are at liberty to earn extra money, which they can spend for what they like.

Efulen has the oversight of eight village schools.

ELAT

Still travelling eastward, thirty-eight miles from Efulen, we come to Elat, which is the chief industrial centre of the Mission. The buildings occupy a beautiful estate of 136 acres, on which great quantities of fruit and vegetables are produced. The students are trained in agriculture, carpentry and stock raising, and before long all the food for the community will be raised on the place. In 1907, the school reports a total enrollment of 426 pupils. Much has been done within the last year and a half to improve this already good school. There are now graded departments for both the vernacular and German, normal classes for training teachers, and military drill for the boys. Regular lectures are given in physiology and hygiene, and the elements of geography are taught. A boarding department for girls was opened in 1900, and has had varying success until since the new German law forbidding young children and girls

to be given in marriage. Now there are more women in the day school than ever before, and the dormitory is full.

This station has under its care eight village schools, with a combined attendance of four hundred and thirty. All of these schools are more than self-supporting.

MacLEAN MEMORIAL

The most distant of our Kamerun stations is at Lolodorf, seventy miles from Batanga by the Government road. The station was occupied in 1898, and a school for boys was begun by Mrs. Lehman in December, 1899. A missionary writes:

DEPARTURE OF MISSIONARIES

"The three hundred and seventy-five boys and young men in our school could be increased by many more if we had a *permanent* German teacher. This is true also of the other four stations in South Kamerun. There are only four German teachers in all, which does not provide for absences nor for the new station in prospect. We could easily have five hundred and more at our station school; earnest Christian scholars would be trained for teachers, evangelists and other helpers. Many have been added to our catechumen class from our village schools. Last year eight villages asked for schools, besides the five we had already organized."

GIRLS OF MISSION SCHOOL, EFULEN.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

Our Mission is not without its schools or classes of theology. Nineteen young men, some from the coast and some from the interior, are now under instruction; while for many years the coast stations have had their ministerial students in training. This year, seventeen new candidates appeared before Presbytery for approval. Later they, with the others, will be gathered at Benito and Elat respectively.

SCHOOLS IN WEST AFRICA

under the care of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.

GABOON DISTRICT (French)

ANGOM—Boarding School.
BARAKA, LIBREVILLE—Boarding School and Day School.

BENITO DISTRICT (Spanish)

BENITO—Boarding School, Day School.
CORISCO—Boarding School, Day School.

KAMERUN DISTRICT (German)

BATANGA—Boarding School, 2 Day Schools.
EFULEN—Boarding School, Day School.
ELAT—Boarding School, Day School.
MACLEAN MEMORIAL (Lolodorf)—Boarding School, Day School.

Twenty-eight village schools.